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HOW MUCH SHALL WE SPEND FOR FOOD?

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, April 9, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 92 associate radio stations.

--ooOoo--

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Yes, here we are in Washington --- with Ruth Van Deman ready to take over.

Ruth, is it more news about the good egg? I'm sure you and Mike Rowell didn't tell half that story last Tuesday.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

No, we hardly more than cracked the shell. But we'll have to let the egg leaflet do the rest just now.

KADDERLY:

Remind me to make that egg leaflet a definite offer before we finish.

VAN DEMAN:

Remind you, Wallace, of "Eggs at Any Meal?" --- with all those suggestions for April breakfasts, dinners, lunches? You don't need any reminding on that.

KADDERLY:

I realize this is the height of the egg season, yes. But sometimes you know the broadcast gets away from us before we say all we mean to say.

VAN DEMAN:

I know. And I have here a very large order to handle in a few minutes. This is a letter from a homemaker in Minnesota. She wants to know ---

"How much should we spend for food, to get a balanced diet. Believe sometimes our diet is not right because of repeated colds."

KADDERLY:

That is a large order. Diet isn't the only way to keep the colds down.

VAN DEMAN:

No, the common cold has all the doctors guessing. But there's no doubt that a diet with lots of "protective" foods does help a person to build resistance to infection.

But getting back to this query about the family food budget ---

KADDERLY:

How large a family is it?

VAN DEMAN:

Four --- the father's a machinist doing hazardous work part of the time, the letter says --- And a big man, 6 feet, 3-1/2 inches tall.

In fact, the whole family's taller than the average. The girl 15 is 5 feet seven, and the boy 13 is a half inch taller than his sister.

(OVER)

KADDERLY:

And I bet he can tuck away more food than she can -- probably as much as his father.

VAN DEMAN:

You know the definition for a 13-year-old boy.

KADDERLY:

Which one? I've heard several.

VAN DEMAN:

"Appetite with skin drawn over it." And seriously, children clear up through their teens do need more milk, for instance, than their fathers.

KADDERLY:

Does the letter give you any idea how much money this family can put into food?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, the husband's wages average \$40 a week. Which means to get an adequate diet, they'll have to spend somewhere between 25 to 30 per cent of their income on food.

KADDERLY:

You mean they can get an adequate diet for -- check my arithmetic --- 10 to 12 dollars a week for the four of them?

VAN DEMAN:

Your arithmetic is correct. And I do mean they can get an adequate but not fancy diet, for 10 to 12 dollars a week, if they know food values.

KADDERLY:

Does that check with what Dr. Stiebeling says and with your bulletin on "Diets to Fit the Family Income?"

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, we always turn to them for the answers on food budgets. I'm sending this homemaker a copy of "Diets to Fit," as we call it for short. And I hope she has as good success working out her food budget as this lady who wrote us from Tacoma, Washington.

I'm going to read this letter just "as is." "Please accept my sincere thanks for the bulletin 'Diets to Fit the Family Income.' It has been of great help to me. I was enabled to save a dollar per week on my grocery bill and at the same time serve better meals. The savings were spent on a most enjoyable trip to Yellowstone National Park."

KADDERLY:

That is beating the budget for sure --- better meals for less money, and a trip to Yellowstone on the savings.

VAN DEMAN:

Almost too good to be true, isn't it? But getting back for a minute to the Minnesota family, I took the "Diets-to-Fit" bulletin and worked out a market list for the four of them for a week.

KADDERLY:

A suggested market list.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, of course any market list has to be changed when you get to the store. Any smart shopper watches for seasons of plenty, and takes advantage of low prices.

Wallace, maybe you'd be interested in glancing at these totals.

KADDERLY:

Totals for a family of four --- for a week. Milk - 16-1/2 quarts --- That's quite a lot of milk.

VAN DEMAN:

That includes milk to cook with as well as to drink. That doesn't necessarily mean all fluid milk. And they'll probably use some of it in the form of ice cream and cheese.

KADDERLY:

Potatoes - 15 pounds. Umm -- a peck of potatoes.

VAN DEMAN:

The other root vegetables are taken care of farther down the line.

KADDERLY:

Tomatoes and citrus fruits - at least 4 pounds. Leafy green and yellow vegetables - 7 pounds.

VAN DEMAN:

Those two groups are put up separately because of their vitamin values.

KADDERLY:

"Protective" foods, that is.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, eggs come in that class too.

KADDERLY:

Eggs, eggs --- yes, here they are --- 15 eggs. No more than that?

VAN DEMAN:

Certainly if there's money to buy them. And eggs are cheap right now practically everywhere.

KADDERLY:

Meat, fish, poultry - 6 pounds.

VAN DEMAN:

Minnesota being the State of lakes, maybe father and son will go fishing one of these spring days, and come home with a big mess of fresh fish that will boost that total.

Well, we won't take time for the other vegetables, and cereals, and fats, and sugar and sweets. But they're all down in the bulletin in pounds and ounces per person. And it gives four diets --- starting at the liberal for those who don't have to watch their pennies so closely, and going down to the very restricted for emergency use only.



KADDERLY:

So any family can work out its own food budget from these figures.

VAN DEMAN:

That's the only way to get one that fits.

KADDERLY:

Then, Ruth, with your approval, I'll suggest that anyone who wants to work out a food budget, and maybe save enough money for a vacation next summer ---

VAN DEMAN:

Easy there, Wallace, we can't guarantee that.

KADDERLY:

Anyway, you'll send the bulletin with the food budgets -- the bulletin called "Diets to Fit the Family Income."

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, we'll guarantee to do that. But the family budgeteer will have to do the rest. By the way, there are menus in that bulletin to match the market lists at the four different levels of cost.

And the egg leaflet, Wallace.

KADDERLY:

That's right. I'm not forgetting.

Well, Farm and Home friends (ad lib offer of "Eggs at Any Meal" and "Diets to Fit the Family Income").

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